Mutants & Masterminds

Astonishing Adventures

Nether War
#3: Broken Strings

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A WEIRD ADVENTURE
FOR 4-6 HEROES OF PL 10

Astonishing Adventures

NETHERWAR 3: BROKEN STRINGS

Suggested PL: 10

Required Books: M&M Deluxe Hero's Handbook, M&M Deluxe Gamemaster's Guide

Suggested Books: Freedom City

Freedom City has been plagued by a blight of evil magic and mysterious arcane crimes, and the paranormal events show no sign of stopping! The most recent manifestation of these dark tidings is a rash of toy- and game-themed incidents around town. In responding to this sudden crime wave, the heroes eventually trace the events back to the disembodied villain, Toy Boy. But soon they learn that Toy Boy himself is merely a pawn of a far more powerful evil lurking in the shadows! Their investigation is interrupted by the supervillain Warden, whose prison dimension has been infiltrated by Toy Boy in search of a powerful artifact. The heroes must explore the deadly Dungeon Dimension and face the threats within to interrupt the apocalyptic events Toy Boy—and his dark master—have set in motion.

Broken Strings is an investigation-focused adventure for four to six PL 10 heroes, though it may be scaled for larger or smaller hero teams by adding/subtracting from the villains' ranks. While the adventure's premise centers around a Freedom City landmark, the story can be set in any metropolitan area.

SECRET ORIGINS

Lady Una, Dark Lord of dark lords, has perfected her plan to ascend to divinity, and she intends to conquer Earth as the final step in that plan. But Master Mage Adrian Eldritch foresaw her plan and intervened, trapping her as a disembodied spirit and establishing a series of magical talismans to block her ascension. That setback didn't stop Una, and now she is empowering villains and minions around the world to seek out and destroy the talismans in her stead.

Her current favorite and most overt servant is the villain Toy Boy. When Desmond Lettam discovered he was dying from the same genetic abnormality that caused his eternal youth, he sought every technological solution he could think of to save himself. Una felt his pain and fear and came to Desmond in his dreams, promising him immortality in exchange for his soul. When Toy Boy agreed, she wrenched the villain's soul free and transformed him into a creature of magic—an invisible phantom who could spy on the material world and further her plots even while she remained trapped.

The heroes have already encountered agents of Lady Una, though they have yet to learn of the dark power behind these villains' actions. After defending Adrian Eldritch's sacred sanctum, the Nerian Nexus, and protecting the magical treasures found in that pocket dimension,

they then battled HellQueen at Vhoka's Maw to stop her from destroying several ancient talismans (and possibly sacrificing the Factor Four). They may have found discarded toys in both adventures—clues to Toy Boy's presence—though the puppet master fled before the heroes could confront him or learn about his mission.

Unbeknownst to the heroes, Toy Boy had infiltrated the Nerian Nexus at Una's orders, seeking to learn how Eldritch still bars Una's spirit from merging with Earth-Prime's magic and completing her ascension. He discovered the Master Mage had created several artifacts—the Eldritch Talismans—that form an arcane firewall around the planet's arcane energies. Now that Toy Boy has retrieved a list of the Talismans, Una has dispatched magical villains to destroy mystical artifacts around the globe—such as HellQueen's quest in *The Pentagram Peril*—while Toy Boy works to eliminate the few left in Freedom City.

IN THIS EXCITING ISSUE...

The heroes deploy to confront a pair of transforming robots wreaking havoc across Freedom City, only to find that the Transmorphers were merely a distraction to cover up a trio of targeted robberies. Upon investigating the attacks, the heroes discover a number of unique objects have been stolen, each somehow connected to the vanished Master Mage Adrian Eldritch. Clues found at the scenes of these crimes suggest a strange toy theme and point toward an abandoned family entertainment restaurant near the Ocean Heights Amusement Park.

Investigating the abandoned restaurant provides several clues about Lady Una's promises to Toy Boy and her ultimate plans, including a surprising finding—that one final, unintended talisman remains: The Golden Mask of Malador the Mystic. But their exploration is interrupted when a badly injured Warden arrives on the scene. Toy Boy ambushed the villain and stole the key to his Dungeon Dimension, intending to seek out this final talisman.

Whether the heroes earn and accept Warden's begrudging aid or drive the injured villain away, they must access the Dungeon Dimension in pursuit of Toy Boy before it's too late! As they make their way through the Dungeon Dimension, they face down Warden's traps and numerous foes, including an undead dragon guardian and a number of the once-imprisoned villains—some the heroes confronted in earlier adventures—whom Toy Boy released as he made his way to the Dungeon Dimension's vault.

Finally, the heroes face off against Toy Boy just as the villain gets his puppet hands on the final talisman—the Mask of Malador the Mystic! Their interruption sends the powerful artifact flying between dimensions, and the heroes must survive an all-out attack by the infuriated Toy Boy and his army of animated toy minions!

INVOLVING THE HEROES

Heroes can become involved with *Broken Strings* in many ways, depending on the sort of *Mutants & Masterminds* game you are running:

- If you're running Broken Strings as part of the NetherWar adventure series, the magical chaos of *Assault on the Nerian Nexus* and *The Pentagram Peril* have left the residents of Freedom City on edge, and the heroes are on the lookout for strange occurrences. The riotous racket of robotic revelry at the start of this adventure likely draws the heroes' attention, whether they encounter the Transmorphers on their own or hear about the incident from media or police sources.

THE NETHERWAR

Broken Strings is the third episode in the NetherWar adventure series, but the adventure also works as a stand-alone story with some minor adaptations. In this case, Toy Boy remains the villain of the story, but isn't working for Una. Instead, he has developed an obsession with *la Fille Rouge*, a cursed doll created by French aristocrats in the 17th century. Responsible for mysterious disappearances and surviving dozens of attempts to destroy it, the toy was last seen in Perleberg, Prussia, on November 25, 1809. Toy Boy has found several recent appearances of the doll that lead him to conclude it is stored in Warden's Dungeon Dimension.

In this case, the destruction at the Kirby Museum was a 17th century French music box that contained a hidden diary detailing an early study of *la Fille Rouge* before its author's unexplained death. In this version, Jianna Delacure also deals antiquities and passed over a chance to buy the reputed doll several years ago, and Toy Boy needs her to divulge the seller's identity. Finally, Kim Roberts painted a still life of the doll in exchange for a large bequest, but the client never returned for the painting, and she eventually used the artwork in her tarot deck. Toy Boy's final transformation is not caused by Una but is instead the result of a power boost *la Fille Rouge* provides him.

- Trouble might find the heroes as Toy Boy's Transmorpher robots bowl them over in the streets while they go about their ordinary lives. This might prompt a short scene of rescuing people endangered by the goons' antics before chasing and confronting them.
- If the heroes aren't keeping watch for unusual incidents, someone with ties to the Kirby Museum of Fine Arts, the North Bay Yacht Club, or the local art or game scene might get a call from security officers at one of the locations in **Scene 2**, reporting their incident and asking for help. Those leads might mention their difficulty in gaining police assistance due to the rampaging robot cars elsewhere in the city—giving the heroes a reason to pursue the Transmorphers. Alternatively, Toy Boy's Transmorpher minions might interrupt the heroes' investigations of the other crime scenes, or their rampage might draw the heroes' attention after they wrap up their investigation of a given site.
- Finally, canny heroes might have discovered evidence of Toy Boy's lurking presence in earlier adventures and begin specifically investigating his current whereabouts. In this case, Toy Boy releases the Transmorphers in more of a panic as the meddling heroes force him to accelerate his plans.

SCENE 1 CONFLICT SCENE

TRANSMORPH AND GO ALL OUT

Normally, car chases aren't a cause for immediate alarm in Freedom City. Plenty of career criminals think they can escape justice by speeding down the 525, and even the occassional supervillain hits the road in a souped-up hotrod as part of their getaway.

But normally the cars involved in those chases have drivers. And, normally, those cars don't take turns performing stunts like driving on two wheels, grinding along the Century Bridge railings, or spewing motor-oil graffiti across billboards and shop fronts.

To begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following news report:

"This is Roger Omak, your Sky Eye One in the WFON news chopper! And ladies, gentlemen, and other assorted genders, this morning's commute will be one for the record books! We've got backups from State Route 6 at Lincoln all the way north to the SR9-525 interchange. If you don't have anywhere to be, STAY HOME, because you're not getting there anyway.

"The source of all this chaos is not one but two unidentified cars tearing their way across downtown and over the bridges. These daredevils are already responsible for an estimated $2 million in damages and—get a shot of that, Kelly! You're not seeing things, folk, that is a car grinding on the Lindroos Bridge railing. I don't know if this is the traffic report or extreme sports.

"I'm going to swing the Sky Eye One in low while Kelly gets the telephoto lens on, and we'll see if we can't bring you all a close-up of our mysterious racers. Here we go aaaaand... No one. You're sure we're on the right side, Kelly?

"Viewers, like I said: today is one for the record books. It seems like our daredevil stunt cars have no one behind the wheel! Looks like you can't blame reckless drivers for this one..."

The adventure begins as a pair of self-driving cars—life-size **Transmorpher** robot toys—cause havoc all over the city, leading to substantial property damage in the form of wrecked vehicles and buildings, in addition to a city-wide traffic jam as they careen along State Routes 4 and 6. Emergency responders are scrambling to keep up with the chaos.

If the heroes aren't inclined to investigate the robots based solely on their destructive rampage, breaking news reports reveal that the cars' color scheme and insignia suggest they might be linked to a local hero—perhaps one of the heroes themselves!

Whether the heroes seek out the disturbance or find themselves caught up in the chaos as they go about their business, it quickly becomes clear that these cars are more than meets the eye.

PROBLEM POWERS

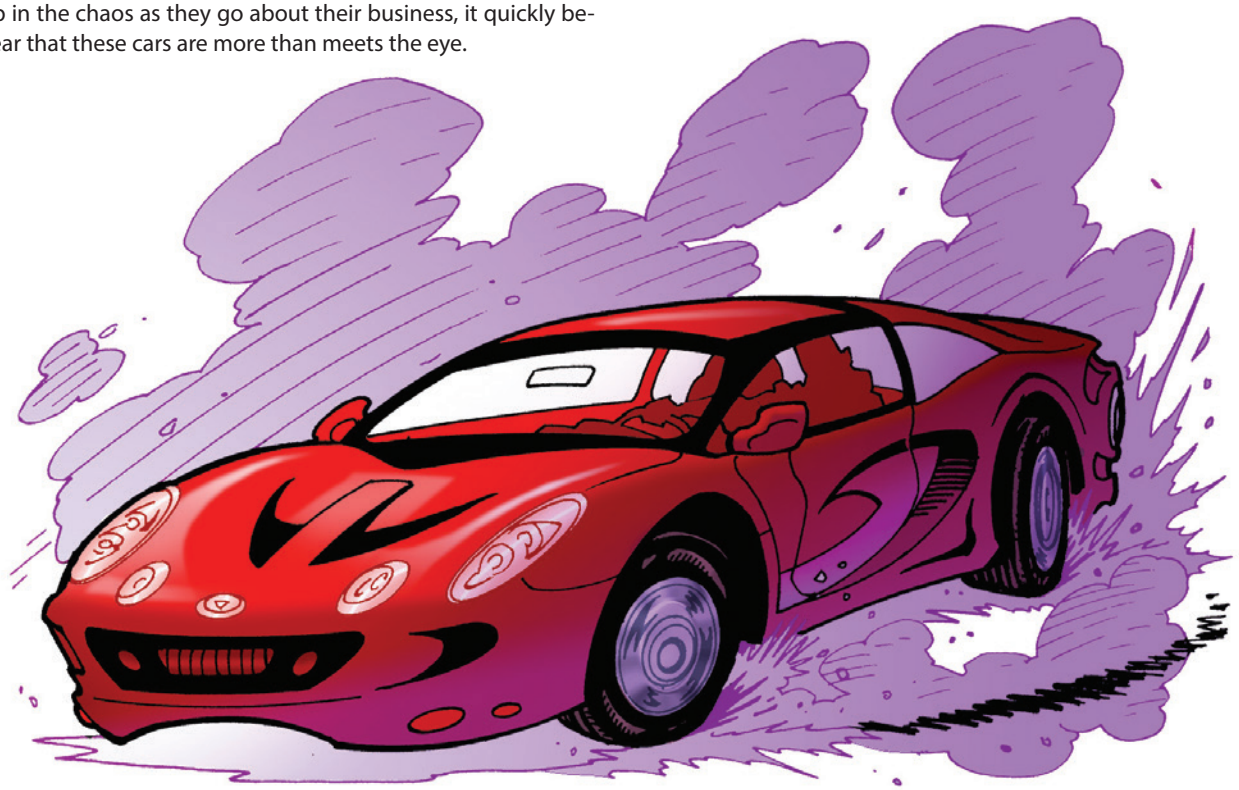
Like most mystery adventures, some of the intrigue and challenge of *Broken Strings* can be circumvented with the Senses (Postcognition) ability, though Toy Boy doesn't necessarily narrate his intentions as he directs each crime. Players can witness the events unfold in detail and identify the villain early, but doing so doesn't reveal his lair or lead them immediately to Warden and his extraplanar prison.

A portion of this adventure takes place in a prison pocket dimension that limits the utility of certain powers, including Flight, Movement (Dimensional Travel), and Teleportation. The specific effects of this pocket dimension, and the challenges it presents to heroes with those powers, are described in full on page @@.

FREEDOM VIA FREEWAY

This scene takes place on the open streets of Freedom City, though the Transmorphers like to keep their hijinks near the freeways where they can put the pedal to the metal and outrun law enforcement. They've been instructed to specifically avoid Toy Boy's targets on the west side of Liberty Park, the North Bay Yacht Club, and the Boardwalk, as Toy Boy wants no scrutiny while he eliminates the last few Eldritch Talismans protecting Earth-Prime.

The urban setting provides all the conveniences a team of heroes might want for a city-street throwdown, including abandoned and wrecked cars, power lines, parking meters, office buildings, and so forth. Most civilians flee the area once the Transmorphers arrive, but it's entirely possible for a child or office worker to become trapped and need rescue if the heroes are having too easy a time keeping up with these deceptive androids. Heroes can identify that the cars are from a popular animated series with a successful DC 22 Expertise (Pop Culture) test (DC 15 once they transform into robots).



CHALLENGE: CATCH US IF YOU CAN!

The robots have been programmed to keep the heroes occupied for as long as possible. Once the heroes arrive on the scene, the cars rev their engines and roar off. If they want to stop the mayhem, the heroes will have to give chase! The Transmorphers stick together, but their chaotic routes through Freedom City mean the heroes need to exercise control and caution as well as speed.

You might consider changing this high-speed chase into an aquatic affair if one or more of your heroes favors swimming over land speed or flight, making one or both of the transforming robots a speedboat, airboat, or submarine. Likewise, a team of flyers might have more fun tackling transforming jets, helicopters, or prop planes. If your heroes lack movement powers and vehicles, you might instead turn this into a strategic challenge, letting heroes analyze the robots' movements with Expertise: Tactics and/or Insight to predict where they'll arrive next and set up an ambush.

Time: 1 round

Checks: Acrobatics (for Flight or Leaping), Athletics (for Speed or Leaping), or Vehicles (for heroes piloting a vehicle) opposed by the Transmorphers' Vehicles check (Beamer and Screamer have a +6 modifier). If a hero has a significant speed advantage, apply a circumstance modifier to their pursuit checks: a 2-rank advantage grants a +2 circumstance bonus, while 4+ ranks of difference grant a +5 bonus instead.

Success: The heroes must collectively generate 6 Degrees of Success to corner the Transmorphers and halt their rampage. Once they do, roll for initiative and shift to a Conflict scene.

Consequences: Since the robots' main mission is to keep the heroes occupied, even if the heroes bungle their attempts at pursuit, the Transmorphers simply resume their antics until the heroes catch up again. Failed checks reflect the maneuverable robots getting the better of their pursuers—sideswiping them, ramming them, or knocking them into roadblocks—inflicting Strength damage, but not escaping.

TACTICS

Once the heroes have them cornered, the cars reveal their true nature and transform into surprisingly large and sturdy robots from one of Lettam's favorite childhood television programs: *Transmorphers: Robots Concealed*. Named Beamer and Screamer, these transforming robots are interested only in continuing their rampage and strive to eliminate the pesky heroes trying to interrupt their fun.

Neither Beamer nor Screamer are brilliant combatants. They generally just roll sideways and blast away with their lasers rather than taking cover or using the environment to their advantage.

ROLEPLAYING BEAMER AND SCREAMER

The Transmorphers have aggressive artificial personalities, interspersing insults and mockery between their blows. They're little more than glorified video game AIs, programmed with a handful of catchy phrases and insults, and react to most questions or insults with a snide quip.

If confronted about their origin or purpose, the only information Beamer or Screamer can provide is that their programming requires them to stay away from specific areas in their rampage. They know very little else about the world, origins, or even their creator.

BEAMER AND SCREAMER (2) PL 7

See **Cast** section.

COMBAT		INITIATIVE +0
Unarmed	+5	Close, Damage 9
Weapon Systems	+6	Ranged, Damage 8

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+3	+4	—	—	+10

WRAP-UP

Once they've defeated the Transmorphers, emergency responders begin to get the city back under control, leaving the heroes free to wonder where these machines came from and who's behind this most recent bout of chaos. With a successful DC 20 Technology skill check or powers like Comprehend (Machines), characters can learn that the robots were specifically programmed to avoid certain areas: the west side of Liberty Park, the North Bay Yacht Club, and the Boardwalk. Heroes can learn similar information by mapping the Transmorphers' routes of destruction or speaking with the media or emergency responders, identifying areas they avoided with a successful DC 20 Investigation or Persuasion skill check. If the heroes think to investigate any strange crimes or events in these areas, award them a Hero Point, otherwise crime victims will reach out to them to begin the next scene.

These three sites are the locations of the three Eldritch Talismans Toy Boy destroyed, which the heroes can learn more about in **Scene 2**.

SCENE 2 INVESTIGATION SCENE

A TRANSGRESSION OF TOYS

While the Transmorphers were wreaking havoc on the city streets, Toy Boy used the distraction to conduct three separate burglaries at locations across the city: the **Kirby Museum of Fine Arts** (along the western edge of Liberty Park), a houseboat moored at the **North Bay Yacht Club**, and **On Deck**, a card and collectibles shop near the Boardwalk.

In each case, Toy Boy's goal was to destroy a unique item that served as one of Adrian Eldritch's protective wards blocking Una from merging with the magic of Earth-Prime. Toy Boy has an unquenchable fondness for creating games and leaving clues, and can only act through animated toys, both of which make these bizarre crimes more connected they might otherwise appear.

The heroes don't need to investigate all three crimes to move forward with the adventure. Multiple options are provided so that the heroes have several leads to follow from any crime scene (particularly with the right super powers), so they aren't stuck if they lose one line of evidence. If their findings lead them to the abandoned restaurant in **Scene 3** before they investigate all the evidence in this scene, that's fine! You might even reward their investigative skills later in the adventure by reducing the number of escaped villains or animated toys they face in the Dungeon Dimension in **Scene 5** or **Scene 6**. Alternately, if they struggle, don't bring the adventure to a halt; witnesses may recall additional clues later and contact the heroes.

KIRBY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

Motion alarms went off in the museum's storage rooms a few hours after closing, but with all hands on deck to respond to the Transmorpher-induced panic, no one has been able to investigate this relatively minor blip. The heroes might be contacted directly by the museum's security staff, they might hear about the incident through police scanners or media reports, or they might notice that the museum is one of the places the Transmorphers specifically avoided in their rampage. Heroes with a good reputation in Freedom City can easily gain entrance to the museum, but unknown or disliked heroes may need to succeed at a Persuasion or Stealth check to gain entry.

The scene itself is still taped off but has little about it that's suspicious except an empty picture frame near broken pottery. A successful DC 15 Investigation check finds a lump of coral-colored putty flecked with dried paint among the green pottery shards. Investigating the now-empty picture frame reveals shreds of the same putty. Two or more Degrees of Success reveals a few oily smears, suggesting something moved from the picture frame to the crockery and then destroyed it. The heroes can identify the putty with a successful DC 10 Expertise (Chemistry) or Expertise (Pop Culture) test, or a DC 15 Technology check: a stretchy silicone polymer commonly sold as a silly children's toy under the name Wonder Putty.

Heroes who can sense magic can feel lingering traces of it on the green fragments of the broken vase and the frame, while heroes whose magical sense is Acute or Analytical can tell they are very different powers: the pottery radiates defensive magic crafted via hermetic traditions, and the frame is wracked with spirit energy.

The museum's security footage reveals exactly what happened. Well-respected heroes only need to ask a curator or the security director, while unknown or notorious heroes may need to negotiate, break in, or hack the museum's security system. Once the heroes view the security recording, read or paraphrase the following:

> The security footage seems uneventful at the time of the robot attack, showing an unremarkable view that includes a somehow wrong portrait of Adrian Eldritch as well as the green vase now shattered on the floor. After a moment, the painting convulses, then slides to the floor. It continues moving on its own toward the vase, where it wraps around the artifact and crushes it. The portrait then morphs into a rubbery pink fluid and forces its way out through the small ventilation duct.

Heroes viewing the recording can attempt to determine what about the Eldritch portrait was wrong with an Expertise (Art) check. Heroes can use Expertise (Freedom City) or Expertise (Pop Culture) instead, but take a –5 circumstance penalty.

EXPERTISE: ART (ALT: FREEDOM CITY OR POP CULTURE)

RESULT	INFORMATION
DC 10	The painting, simply titled "Eldritch" is usually what you see on the scant Adrian Eldritch merchandise that's been released, so almost everyone in the city has probably seen it on a T-shirt or a trading card.
DC 12	The painting is by Kim Roberts, a local artist and superhero fan.
DC 15	The painting looks off because it's a mirror image—left is right and right is left! With this result, heroes also know that Roberts runs a card and collectibles shop, called On Deck, over on the Broadway.

The vase was a historical curiosity and so donated to the art museum rather than included in the Super Museum exhibit celebrating his life. Unknown to the curators, this vase was the **Green Man's Ear**, a large piece of jade shaped by elemental magic that could summon and commune with nature spirits. It was also one of the last remaining Eldritch Talismans protecting the world against Una's conquest.

The museum's records show that the painting Eldritch, was recently donated by **Dalton Medmast**, a reclusive tech-sector worker (secretly an anagram of Toy Boy's real name, Desmond Lettam). The donation was arranged via web conferencing. According to those same records, the artist of the painting is Kim Roberts, a well-known painter who owns a card shop near the Boardwalk (see **On Deck—The Boardwalk's Finest Card Shop** below). A successful DC 15 Technology check can trace the donor's name and learn that it's a fake alias. Heroes who succeed at a DC 20 Persuasion check to Gather Information can learn that the donor also recently bought a number of pieces of inexpensive property around town, including an old Sinbad's Palace arcade, a defunct children's theatre called the Fairy Glen, an abandoned Pete E. Popcorn's restaurant, a shuttered Toys-4-You store, and a gutted building that once served as an elementary school. Heroes might decide to investigate these locations, but can narrow down their search window by investigating the other crimes.

NORTH BAY YACHT CLUB

At the North Bay Yacht Club, a houseboat was attacked by inflatable sharks that mauled the boat's resident and owner, **Jianna Delacure**, as well as the marina's security guards (use the statistics for a **Police Officer**; *Deluxe Game Master's Guide*, page 151). The scene is a mess, and Jianna—known to her neighbors and the art scene as a minor dabbler in the supernatural with more money than talent—has gone missing.

The houseboat itself contains a small shrine to Adrian Eldritch, which the sharks methodically destroyed—except for one card from a tarot deck, showing Eldritch—the same image from the museum portrait—as the Magician. A character who succeeds at a DC 15 Investigation check determines that this card was set aside before everything else was destroyed, as if someone had been studying it while the destruction took place. The copyright information along the bottom of the card refers to Kim Roberts and the On-Deck card shop near the Boardwalk.

Heroes can find a useful clue with either a successful DC 10 Investigation check to rifle through the scattered documents or a DC 15 technology check to break into Jianna's laptop. Both her personal documents and her e-mail show Jianna has spent much of the last several months tracking the fate of **Malador the Mystic's** personal possessions after his most recent defeat, particularly his Golden Mask. She most recently concluded the supervillain **Warden** stole the mask, and she had been contacting him with offers to buy the artifact.

Anyone who can track the boat's owner or the inflatable sharks using abilities like Tracking senses or Comprehend Spirits can see the sharks headed south across the bay, toward the Ocean Heights Amusement Park and Providence Asylum. Alternatively, someone who succeeds at a DC 15 Investigation check to Gather Information finds witnesses who saw the sharks heading across the bay—their inflatable nature means they must swim on top of the water, making their passage fairly obvious—in the direction of the amusement park.

Heroes who follow the sharks' path can find Jianna, bloody and half-drowned but alive; use the statistics for a **Cult Adept** (*Deluxe Game Master's Guide*, page 146). She attributes her survival to the Leviathan Band, a belt made from the hide of a water dragon—even boasting it had once belonged to Adrian Eldritch before his untimely passing. The magic of the belt gave her some minor aquatic powers, including the ability to hold her breath for a supernaturally long time. Unfortunately, the sharks stole the belt from her before she drifted ashore here. Unbeknownst to the houseboat owner, this belt was one of the few remaining Eldritch Talismans, and Toy Boy has since destroyed it.

Jianna can recall that the sharks received their orders from a strange humanoid creature but worries the heroes will think she's insane if she admits what she saw. If they press or comfort her, she admits "It was a... a purple shark woman. And she had a banjo!" A successful DC 20 Expertise (Pop Culture) or DC 25 Expertise (Freedom City) recognizes the description as Mindy Mako, a defunct robot that was part of the backup band from the old Pete E. Popcorn chain of family entertainment restaurants that went out of business around the turn of the century. Toy Boy used his powers to animate Mindy and sent her to oversee the attack.

If asked why she is looking for the Mask of Malador, she admits with some embarrassment she wanted a powerful magic artifact of her own so other members of the magical community would take her more seriously and invite her to events.

On Deck—Boardwalk's Finest Card Shop

On Deck, a small shop near the Boardwalk, sells all sorts of cards, from playing cards and specialized decks for magic tricks to baseball cards, collectible card games, and more specialized items. One of their most popular offerings to tourists is a series of hero-and-villain tarot decks designed and illustrated by the owner, **Kim Roberts** (use the statistics for a **Bystander** with Expertise: Painting; *Deluxe Game Master's Guide* page 145). During the Transmorphers' joyride, a handful of the collector's edition action figures in the shop came to life, broke free of their original packaging (completely ruining their value) and hurled the thousands of cards within into a massive jumbled heap on the floor. The police haven't prioritized this report given the other incidents around town, and so the heroes are more likely to hear about it from mystic contacts or with a dedicated effort looking for strange events around the Boardwalk area once the heroes realize it's one of the few places the Transmorphers avoided.

When the heroes speak with the shop's owner, Kim reveals that while she has several days of sorting cards ahead of her, she doesn't believe anything was stolen. If asked about valuables, or if Adrian Eldritch is mentioned, Kim checks the vault that contains the originals of the paintings she created for the hero and villain tarot decks. She painted most of them based on news footage, but in a few cases—including in Eldritch's case for the Magician card—she managed to get heroes to model in real life. Only this last painting is missing from within the sealed vault, having been stolen and destroyed by Toy Boy.

If the heroes do a tarot reading with either the hero or villain deck, Toy Boy as the Hanged Man features prominently (regardless of which deck they use).

Once she realizes the painting is missing, she remarks that "a strange man came in at closing time last week, asking me about it. He knew Eldritch asked me to mix some weird dust into my pigments in exchange for posing. Asked to buy it, too, but I mean, the guy was clearly a villain. Big coat, walrus mustache, sunglasses, insisted on paying in cash. I told him to bug off because I had a sitting with Tess Atoms that night, and he slunk off. Smelled like popcorn, weirdly enough. Do we have a popcorn-themed supervillain in this town?" Roberts is describing an incident last week, when Toy Boy arrived, possessing the Cap'n Walrus animatronic from his hideout—the most human of the band—looking for the painting he believed to be an Eldritch Talisman. The aroma of popcorn, likewise, is a remnant of the hideout, as Toy Boy hadn't yet managed to clean off the robots by the time of this early meeting.

Support from Seven

If the heroes contact Seven to report on their progress or ask for help, the mage seems distracted and irritable, waving away progress reports and simply urging the heroes to "keep at it." You can use Seven to help the heroes connect any dots they might have missed, but she is annoyed at having to do so and gives only minimal hints to get them pointed in the right direction. If the heroes point out her change in attitude since the start of the NetherWar adventure arc, she refuses to discuss her own temperament, insisting that she's frustrated that she is forced to divide her time between saving billions of lives and "hand-holding supposed superheroes." As Una has grown stronger thanks to Toy Boy's machinations, her influence over Seven is likewise becoming more overt, making the sorcerer increasingly short-tempered and condescending.

Wrap-Up

Between these crime scenes, the heroes should eventually find enough information to point them to the abandoned Pete E. Popcorn's Family Funhouse restaurant near the Ocean Heights Amusement Park. If the heroes completely miss all the clues, the police are eventually contacted by Jianna Delacure, the half-drowned houseboat owner, whose formal police report contains information about the strange animatronic creature sighted near the abandoned restaurant. Alternatively, if the heroes reach out to Seven for support or direction, she can conduct a divining ritual to point them to the culprit.

Scene 3 Investigation Scene

Pete E. Popcorn's Family Funhouse

Pete E. Popcorn's is a defunct circus-themed restaurant and arcade originally catering to families visiting the Ocean Heights Amusement Park, with a menu of carnival food, games to win toy prizes, and a musical number "performed" by animatronic lions, elephants, and other circus animals. Many attribute the restaurant's failure in large part to the servers' ostentatious and slightly creepy clown costumes, and it has been abandoned for years. A search of the public property records show that the building was purchased only a few months ago, but nothing seems to have changed as a result.

The restaurant is locked, but with only average locks and no electronic security. Once the heroes enter, read or paraphrase the following:

Other than the faint light from the street, filtering through filthy windows, the only illumination in this abandoned restaurant comes from the stage lights. The primary colors of the walls have faded and cracked, but clearly depict a midway mural, but child-like scrawlings cover much of it with the same image: a vague, feminine figure with black eyes and waving, black hair.

A motley collection of decrepit animatronics in the form of anthropomorphic circus animals perform a tinny carnival tune. The shaggy bear who seems to "lead" the ragtag band swivels with a screech, eyes blinking unevenly, and a childlike voice speaks from its leering grin: "What will the Dark Lady do with you once she has what she wants?"

Toy Boy purchased the building under a false identity a few months ago and has been using it to stage his own operations since. He recently vacated the facility, having entered the Dungeon Dimension in pursuit of the Mask of Malador, but his changes to the restaurant's interior can provide several clues to his plans.

Toy Boy has spent much of his free time repairing the moldering animatronic animals, leaving most of them to sing cheerful but poor-quality recordings of poorer-quality children's songs. He then reprogrammed the lead "singer," the anthropomorphic bear for whom the restaurant was named, to help him consider the ramifications of his decisions via Socratic method. The figure turns toward anyone moving in the room and asks, in Toy Boy's childlike voice, questions like, "Who could have saved you, if not the Dark Lady?" and "What does the Dark Lady need?" while the other animatronics continue their decrepit music. Pete E., as Toy Boy's adored lieutenant, is harmless, but the rest of his band have been made much more dangerous, though they remain inert for now and simply "play" their fake instruments; see **Scene 4**.

The walls of the prize booth still hold some of their displays, including transforming robot action figures, wonder putty, inflatable pool sharks, plush versions of the animatronic mascots, clown masks, and little figurines of superheroes and dragons. This collection, including the fact that some of the toys are identical to those used in the crimes of **Scene 2**, should let the heroes know they're on the right track. The figurines of Adrian Eldritch from Top Deck have been methodically broken and piled up, with a dragon balanced atop them.

TOYING WITH HIM

Toy Boy's mind has been reeling since his change into a spirit, and he keeps copious notes to help him stay focused. Most of these are on a heap of old paper placemats, scrawled with crayon. One stack records his life:

"So hard to remember. Feels like my brain's in... in pieces. My name is Desmond, and I never had to grow up. Everyone hated me for it. They bullied me, those children who grew into men. Oh, they called me a 'baby' but with a jealous gleam in their eyes. My parents hid me away. But my toys were always there for me.

"I love my toys, and they love me.

"And I showed them all how much better toys were than people. You can break a toy and still have fun. It's fun to break a person, but after that, you can't play with them anymore. It was harder to break the heroes, but they also didn't like to play by the rules. They'll regret it. They'll all miss me when I'm gone."

THE MASK OF MALADOR THE MYSTIC

Millennia ago, Malador the Mystic was one of the greatest sorcerers of Atlantis and became one of Earth's greatest Master Mages, but he craved control and nearly transformed Earth into a netherworld to sate his extradimensional masters before the other mages of Atlantis banded together to stop his plot and imprison his corrupt spirit. His tale is intertwined with that of Master Mage Adrian Eldrich, for it was Eldrich who uncovered Malador's tomb in the 1930s and released the ancient lich. The two clashed countless times over the years, and while Eldrich and his allies always managed to prevail, it was always at a great cost—and now that Eldrich has vanished, there is no Master Mage poised to stop Malador's next bid for power should he return. Malador's life force is tied into the golden death mask he was buried with; should his physical body be destroyed, his life force returns to the mask and resides there until a suitable host comes into contact with it.

Unknown to Una or Adrian Eldrich, the Mask of Malador is a powerful artifact tied to the life force of a Master Mage, inadvertantly making it a talisman like those Eldrich fashioned. Its ties to Earth-Prime's magic block Una's ascension. Knowing only that the mask was Malador's key to survival, the supervillain Warden took it upon himself to steal the mask and hide it away in his Dungeon Dimension. After destroying the last three Eldrich Talismans during his attack, Toy Boy realized another accidental ward must exist, and Jianna's interest in the Golden Mask led Una to realize it must be the culprit.

Another describes his bizarre transformation:

"People aren't the only bullies. Life is a bully. My body was supposed to be young forever. The doctors said so! But they lied. My body was dying, they said, and they wouldn't make it stop. They could if they wanted to but they WOULDN'T! I tried so hard to fix it! I'm so smart! Smarter than anyone! Anyone but the Dark Lady.

"The Dark Lady could make it stop. She heard me suffering and came to me in my dreams. The Dark Lady held me close to her, and when it was time, she made me a toy forever! She said I was her favorite child! And there was so much I could do for her. My toys can touch the world for her while she can't, and we can fix everything!"

And a final stack details his plans thus far, as he grows increasingly erratic:

"Eldritch is the biggest bully of them all! He can't even play anymore, but he locked everyone else out of the playroom! The Dark Lady needs to play, but the TOYS! I hate his stupid Eldritch toys! He locks out the Dark Lady. She's all alone and can't play! Spread them all over the world! Big boring jewels and stupid, ugly belts and useless pictures! I WILL SMASH ALL HIS TOYS so the dark Lady can come and play! SHE is the Master Mage! SHE is Unrelenting! SHE will come and the whole world will be her plaything!

"And I am always her favorite little boy!"

A few of his more lucid pages detail the Eldritch Talismans and list them, including the Prime Elements, the Bloodstones of Vhoka, the Green Man's Ear, the Leviathan Band, and the original Magician (along with others destroyed by other villains in the background).

Several of these are objects Toy Boy has sought out and destroyed from the three sites in **Scene 2**. Others the HellQueen stole to sacrifice in *The Pentagram Peril*.

As the heroes finish their investigation, the tinny carnival music in the background abruptly halts, replaced by a screeching voice from the Pete E. Popcorn animatronic. Toy Boy began ranting to himself while recording a new batch of Socratic questions for the character, accidentally leaving his musings to play on repeat in his absence. Read or paraphrase the following:

> The tinny carnival music stops as the animatronic bear wheels around again, blinking with an audible click. "What will you-no! No, no no no, NO! I did the whole list! Smashed all his toys! There must be one left... one I overlooked. One..." The sound of papers shuffling and tables overturning ushers from the bear's mechanical mouth. "One... he overlooked. One he didn't make...Yes. But if not him, then who? Certainly not Seven, that grievous goth gargoyle is useless! But what other Master Mages are still... oh-ho! Yes, it must be that very naughty boy! He's the only one! But he's locked up. And once I destroy the mask, the Dark Lady will be one with the world. I'm going to need a key..."

Toy Boy's ruminations lead him to conclude that the Golden Mask of Malador the Mystic—a powerful magic item tied to the life force of a Master Mage—must be unintentionally serving as the final Eldritch Talisman. Players might figure out he means Malador the Mystic between mentions of a mask and a Master Mage. If not, a successful DC 15 Expertise (Magic) check lets a hero recall that Malador the Mystic was once the Master Mage of Earth, and that his spirit has been forever bound to his golden mask, which remains after his defeat and can restore his soul to a new body if it comes in contact with a suitable host.

WRAP-UP

This scene mostly helps heroes put together the pieces of Toy Boy's plans over the last few adventures. Feel free to leave additional notes detailing his involvement with the heroes' previous adventures to help them realize the scope of the spirit's work.

At the back of the animatronics' stage is a door to the workshop. The crack between the door and the floor flickers with yellowish light like a torch. Toy Boy stole Warden's Door Key and used it to transform the door into a portal to the Dungeon Dimension, where the Mask of Malador lies in safekeeping. The door itself is locked, but it can be picked with a successful DC 20 Technology check, or the heroes can simply smash the door down (Toughness 4). But before the heroes can open the door, the Warden arrives.

SCENE 4 CONFLICT SCENE

ENTER THE WARDEN

As the heroes begin wrapping up their investigation or begin to lose focus (ideally before they break through the door to the Dungeon Dimension), their efforts are interrupted as the supervillain **Warden** arrives on the scene. But his arrival triggers Toy Boy's security: the animatronic band converted into an army of deadly robots!

Warden is injured. Toy Boy, having learned from Jianna's houseboat records that Warden had the Mask of Malador, led the other villain into an ambush, wounded him, and stole his mystic Door Key. Warden felt the key being used and hurried here to intervene, but too late—Toy Boy has already made his way into the Dungeon Dimension.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, OR THE UGLY

While the Pete E. Popcorn animatronic is a harmless gimmick, Toy Boy rebuilt the rest of the band into robotic guardians. However, Toy Boy only expected Warden to come investigating, and so keyed their defense protocols to the supervillain, leaving the mechanical animals harmlessly singing and strumming while the heroes ransacked the hideout. How this scene plays out depends entirely on how the heroes' previous interactions with Warden have gone.

The Good: If the heroes worked with him in the past to help contain other villains—particularly anyone they captured at the end of *Assault on the Nerian Nexus*—then Warden has been badly injured (currently suffering a –8 penalty on Toughness checks) and needs the heroes' help,

as much as he hates to admit. In this scenario, Toy Boy himself left the animatronics active, but solely to guard against Warden's return. The robots activate once he arrives, attacking both the villain and the heroes indiscriminately, and Warden fights alongside the heroes and aids them if they're injured or stunned. He's also more likely to share what he knows about his strange Dungeon Dimension (see **Wrap-Up**).

The Bad: If the heroes refused to hand captive villains over to Warden but didn't attack him, he considers the heroes vain idiots, too soft to do what needs to be done. They're part of the problem and not to be trusted. In this case, Toy Boy has still left the animatronic band active to watch out for Warden's return, but the conflict is a three-way scuffle. Warden alternates his turns attacking animatronic animals and the heroes, and he must be subdued before he'll share anything he knows.

The Ugly: If the heroes have attacked Warden before (either in this adventure series, or in your own adventures), he regards them as enemies. In this scenario, he arrived at the defunct restaurant hours earlier, encountered the security robots, and overrode their programming to serve him. He has waited patiently since then for Toy Boy to return—or for the spirit's accomplices to arrive. Warden observes the heroes while they investigate, revealing himself and attacking if they try to enter the Dungeon Dimension and spoil his ambush. In this case, the robots fight alongside Warden, coordinating their attacks with him to provide Aid bonuses to his defenses and damage.

ROLEPLAYING WARDEN

Warden genuinely feels that he's the person best suited to control the events taking place, and that he's the only one who can keep serious threats contained. He's arrogant and cruel but at least works by a code, making him a more reliable partner than other villains.

In combat, Warden does whatever he needs to get the job done. He drops smoke grenades when he can, relying on the infravision in his helmet to let him see while opponents are hopefully blinded. If he can isolate one hero while the others battle robots, he prefers to Grab enemies, using his Chokehold Advantage to knock them out. Otherwise he wades into close combat with his tonfa.

ROLEPLAYING THE PETE E. POPCORN BAND

The Pete E. Popcorn band—Mindy Mako, Cap'n Walrus, Lyle Lion, Mr. Koala-Ty, and the rest—began life as little more than steel rods and gears connected to a cheap stereo system and draped with fake fur, but Toy Boy has rebuilt them into technological marvels. While mostly mindless, they can move and act independently, and even remain sufficiently toy-like that he can possess them as makeshift bodies when he needs. The robots continue singing children's songs as they close in to attack.

There are as many animatronic robots as there are heroes, plus one.

WARDEN — PL 10

See **Cast** Section.

COMBAT — **INITIATIVE +7**

Taser	+10	Close, Affliction 5
Tonfa	+12	Close, Damage 8
Unarmed	+12	Close, Damage 3

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+12	+12	+9	+11	+8/6*

*without Defensive Roll

ANIMATRONIC ROBOTS — PL 5

Minions. Medium Robot (Deluxe Gamemaster's Guide, page 152.

STR 5 **STA** — **AGL** –1 **DEX** –1 **FGT** 0 **INT** — **AWE** 0 **PRE** —

Powers: Immunity 30 (Fortitude Effects), Protection 10 (Impervious 6).

Advantages: Close Attack 5.

COMBAT — **INITIATIVE -1**

Unarmed	+5	Close, Damage 5

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+0	+0	—	—	+10

Totals: Abilities –24 + Powers 46 + Advantages 5 + Skills 0 + Defenses 1 = Total 28 points.

INTERROGATIONS

After (or even during) the battle with Toy Boy's animatronic guardians, the heroes can try to get Warden to share what he knows about everything. He doesn't like to admit he needs help and doesn't want to accept assistance from the heroes, but he also knows he's in no shape to handle the situation himself. Though he knows the information he has can help the heroes accomplish his goals, he shares it only grudgingly. Some questions the heroes might ask, and Warden's answers to those questions, are below.

It pains Warden to admit he needs the heroes' help, and he won't ask for their assistance—or offer his own—without encouragement. The heroes can persuade him to let them help with an Intimidation or Persuasion check (DC 15 in the "Good" scenario, DC 20 in the "Bad" scenario, or DC 30 in the "Ugly" scenario). Characters who minister to Warden's wounds with healing powers or the Treatment skill gain a +5 circumstance bonus on their check. If they succeed, he agrees to accept their aid in preventing a full-scale prison break of the countless criminals held within the Dungeon Dimension. He can open the backstage door to the Dungeon Dimension, granting the heroes simpler access than breaking in. He can also provide some advice on dealing with what lies beyond. Finally, as he doesn't want the bothersome Toy Boy loose in his realm, Warden gifts heroes who have earned his begrudging respect a powerful artifact—the Orb of Ghorummaz—which can indefinitely imprison an ethereal entity.

What does Toy Boy want in the Dungeon Dimension?

"What does anyone want with a prison? An inmate. No one busts in because they like the food. It's not supposed to be nice!"

Without additional information, Warden doesn't actually know what Toy Boy is after.

What do you know about the Mask of Malador?

"Malador the Mystic? Evil undead bastard from Atlantis? Thinks being an immortal god-mage puts him above the law. His life essence is tied up in that mask of his—if you take him out, he just holes up in the mask until some schmuck stumbles across it and puts it on. Ready-made cell, you ask me, if you can keep idiots and their little shoplifting hands off it!

"The last time you hero types took Malador out of the fight, I took it upon myself to make sure his mask stayed out of reach

of any sticky-fingered little criminals. Put it in my Dungeon Dimension for safekeeping. Was a real pain in my ass to get it there, too. Something about that mask is tied to this planet and doesn't want to leave."

After a moment, he huffs and continues. "You lot aren't the first people asking me about that mask lately. Some collector with more money than wits has been hounding me for weeks to sell it to her."

This collector is, of course, Jianna Delacure, whose attempts at purchasing the mask the heroes might have uncovered in **Scene 2**. If the party shows Warden Toy Boy's notes from the table or suggests that Toy Boy might be after the mask, the villain grows even more grim. "Well, you're going to have to stop him, or this mess is going to get a lot worse before it gets better."

How do we find Toy Boy?

"If he's after the Mask of Malador, he'll be headed to the Secure Vault. My Dungeon Dimension is a maze. Meant to be easy to get into and hard to leave. Easiest way to get through is with the key, but that brat stole it from me, so you'll be on your own. I've never had to navigate it without my key before."

Is the Dungeon Dimension dangerous?

"Heheh. Of course it is! I don't call it a Cushy Resort Dimension. It's not like the jails this sad excuse for a city sends its scum to percolate in. No telling what you'll come across. But there're two things for sure. First, the door to the Secure Vault is meant to keep people out, so it's got a set of three locks with traps to match. Not really any way to get by it other than the key, so you'll either need to disable them or just break down the door.

"Besides that, I'd be surprised if you didn't run up across Mac Aodha sooner or later. He's been around in there a long time. Likes having something to guard and likes me after I gave him a purpose again. He won't take well to you barging in, but you might be able to talk him down. Tell him I sent you, and—let's see, hardly anyone else would know this—when he still had flesh, it was white."

The villain quietly appreciates anyone asking him about his defenses.

What can you tell us about Toy Boy to help us fight him?

"Dunno. Tussled with him a few times back when he was just your average scumbag, but he's something new now. Doesn't have a body—just takes control of whatever inanimate things are around. Not sure if he's limited to toys or if he just prefers 'em. You can beat up whatever thing he's riding, but that's just temporary so long as he's got stuff to possess. You'll have to leave him without anything to take over to get him out of the fight. I've got a little toy that'll fix his little red wagon; shame I didn't have it on me when he jumped me."

Warden is referring to the Orb of Ghorummaz, another artifact stored in his Dungeon Dimension. He remains tight-lipped unless the heroes succeed at a second manipulation skill check, or succeeded at their original test by at least three Degrees of Success.

"The Orb of Ghorummaz. Lifted off some ghost cult that Foreshadow busted up. Thing traps spirits, and I gave it a solid test run on Scream Queen a while back."

The Orb of Ghorummaz

Fist-sized pearls etched with long, sweeping claw marks that resemble wind or waves, Orbs of Ghorummaz are rare and powerful magic tools created by now-extinct cults of the powerful magical entity of the same name. With Ghorummaz's duty being the binder of unnatural things, his followers once took it upon themselves to seal dangerous spirits, ghosts, and even gods away where they can do no harm. Warden tracked down this orb as a means of trapping spiritual villains who couldn't be held with technology, and he carries it with him now as he initially expected to confront the ghostly Toy Boy. If the heroes don't negotiate with the villain, they may still find the Orb if they search Warden to remove all his gadgets and weapons.

The Orb of Ghorummaz is a plot device without fixed rules. It can contain a single incorporeal entity indefinitely if touched to the spirit's form, but that entity must already be Incapacitated or Helpless. Anyone holding the Orb can release the spirit trapped within with a thought. Less powerful imitations also exist, but these allow entities to resist their effects, exert unnatural influence on those nearby, or eventually break free. A true Orb of Ghorummaz is exceedingly rare and precious.

If we help, will you reform/stop using "justice" as an excuse to hurt people?

Warden scoffs and points out that he has numerous villains imprisoned in the Dungeon Dimension, including those captured in the previous NetherWar adventure. He can't turn them loose on the street and doesn't expect the local authorities to make any meaningful progress in keeping them contained. Further, he argues, most villains only pursue a life of crime because the current justice system doesn't sufficiently punish wrongdoers, and he's simply picking up the system's copious slack. The notion of redemption or reform is completely beyond him, because he refuses to believe he's done anything wrong.

Wrap-Up

Ultimately, Warden can't or won't join the heroes, either thanks to injuries he received from Toy Boy or the injuries received battling the heroes. Whether they manage to open the backstage door-portal to the Dungeon Dimension themselves or with Warden's assistance, the heroes' next step is clear: they must follow Toy Boy into the Dungeon Dimension and stop him from reaching the Mask of Malador!

Scene 5 Roleplay/Conflict Scene

Into the Dungeon Dimension

The Dungeon Dimension is a vast maze of stone corridors and prison cells, interspersed with garrisons and vaults. Though the initial impression is one of order and structure, the pocket dimension adheres only to its own complex laws and geometries—straight lines aren't always straight and down isn't always down—making it difficult to navigate. It exists outside of Earth's space and time, making it an ideal prison and hideout.

Its inherently durable construction and unusual dimensional characteristics make it unusually suited to its function as a prison, though Warden supplemented these defenses with his own improvements,

including devious traps and custom cells tailored to contain prisoners whose abilities might otherwise allow them to escape the realm.

When the heroes enter the Dungeon Dimension, read or paraphrase the following:

> The doorway swings open into a dim corridor of gray stone and stale air, lit intermittently with pale orbs that flicker like torches. The hall extends forward, but it's hard to estimate the distance. No decorations adorn the plain walls, and the only features are the occasional intersecting hallway. The air carries a faint whiff of dust and bleach. Far off in the distance are echoes of metal clanking, indecipherable voices, and the ragged sound of stone grinding stone.

Toy Boy can navigate the Dungeon Dimension easily, using the Door Key to open locks or teleport, and he's had several hours' head start. Currently inhabiting a ventriloquist's puppet, he can't fly or pass through walls without sacrificing his ability to carry the Mask of Maladador back with him. Well aware that Warden would be hot on his heels, Toy Boy used the Door Key not only to direct his passage and avoid the traps, but also to release several prisoners along the way. These desparate inmates are now trying to escape the Dungeon Dimension, and they're not willing to let the heroes stop them.

The encounters in the Dungeon Dimension are flexible and can occur in any order you see fit. The heroes may engage a band of escaping prisoners, then find traps, and ultimately face the dragon Mac Aodha before confronting Toy Boy, or they may run into the dragon upon entering and have a chance to win his approval and even guidance before tackling other challenges of the realm. Because all these encounters are part of the same scene, injuries and conditions from one carry over to the others.

ENCOUNTER 1: THE GUARDIAN DRAGON

The appearance of an intruder in the Dungeon Dimension, combined with the sudden release of prisoners, has caught the attention of one of the prison's ancient guardians: **Mac Aodha**. This ancient dragon is nothing but animated bones at this point, and he is equally intent on stopping Toy Boy, keeping the prisoners within from escaping, and preventing other intruders from accessing the Dungeon Dimension.

When the heroes arrive, Mac Aodha assumes they are more intruders looking to wreak havoc and blocks their path. The heroes can fight the dragon to get past it, or they can attempt to persuade it they're working with Warden to stop Toy Boy. Convincing the dragon they're on the same side is a challenge sequence, requiring 5 Degrees of Success at a DC 20 Insight, Intimidation, or Persuasion checks before they accumulate 3 Degrees of Failure. If the heroes mention the insights Warden provided them—that long ago, the still-living dragon had white scales—to prove Warden sent them, they gain a +5 circumstance bonus to their checks. After three failures, however, the dragon concludes that the heroes are trying to deceive him and attacks.

If the heroes convince Mac Aodha, it explains the conundrum and offers two ways it can help. The dragon can either confront and take down some of the villains running free in the Dungeon Dimension (leading to fewer fights for the heroes), or it can force open the door to the Secure Vault (avoiding the skill challenge in **Scene 6**). If the heroes fight the dragon, they must handle both threats on their own.

ROLEPLAYING MAC AODHA

Mac Aodha is ancient and alien. He exists to guard this place, though he can't remember what it is, and his will is so powerful it has allowed him to outlast death. He loathes Warden and won't call him a partner, let alone a master, but tolerates that the strange alien beast brings him new charges to guard.

Once a fight begins, Mac Aodha creates four incarnations of his will for aid. These psychic entities manifest from the echoes of countless prisoners trapped in the Dungeon Dimension through the ages. They've never regained their free will, and use all their actions only to aid Mac Aodha to augment the dragon's defenses and attacks. The dragon then uses its frost breath to catch as many of the heroes as possible. It snaps at anyone who comes close to its powerful, toothy bite.

MAC AODHA — PL 11

See **Cast** section.

COMBAT — **INITIATIVE +4**

Bite	+8	Close, Penetrating Damage 12
Frost breath	—	Close, Cone Area, Damage 10
Unarmed	+8	Close, Damage 13

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+5	+7	—	+11	+14

TULPAS (4) — PL 7

See **Cast** section. Minions.

STR 2 **STA** — **AGL** 6 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 6 **INT** — **AWE** 7 **PRE** —

Powers: Immunity 30 (Fortitude Effects), Close Damage 7 (Mind Lash, Alternate Resistance: Will).

Advantages: Close Attack.

Skills: Perception 4 (+11), Stealth 4 (+10).

COMBAT — **INITIATIVE +6**

Mind Lash	+7	Close, Damage 7; Will Resists
Unarmed	+7	Close, Damage 2

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+6	+6	—	—	+8

Totals: Abilities 12 + Powers 44 + Advantages 1 + Skills 4 (8 ranks) + Defenses 8 = 69 points.

ENCOUNTER 2: WATCH YOUR STEP

Warden has installed countless traps throughout the Dungeon Dimension as a safeguard against exactly this situation: prisoners escaping from their cells and trying to break free. Most of these traps were designed in coordination with the pocket dimension's confusing layout and exist along routes leading toward the dimension's exit rather than those leading inward, but some have been placed to catch anyone wandering the corridors unauthorized.

As with many hazards in the Dungeon Dimension, the bearer of Warden's Door Key can bypass this trap, and thus Toy Boy wandered by unaware of the danger he escaped. The heroes are not so lucky.

THE CATTLE PEN TRAP

A pair of electrified grates hang suspended in slots within the stone ceiling. When a character passes over this section of the floor—actually a large pressure plate—these walls drop down, turning a 20-foot by 20-foot section of the hall into an impromptu prison cell. Heroes can notice the trap before setting it off with a successful DC 20 Perception check. With one Degree of Success, a character gains a +2 circumstance bonus to a Dodge check to dive out of the way. Two Degrees of Success grants a +5 circumstance bonus to Dodge, and with three or more the hero spots the pressure plate before stepping on it, automatically succeeding at the Dodge check.

Disabling the trap before setting it off requires either one character to succeed at a DC 26 Technology check or for each character to pass through this 20-foot section of hall without touching the floor (a DC 20 Acrobatics check is enough to spring across, as are powers like Flight, Leaping, or Movement [wall crawling]).

Once activated, the trap seals trespassers inside. Heroes can try to leap free of the closing gates with a successful DC 20 Dodge resistance check. The bars have Toughness 10 and carry an electrical current that builds up over the course of a round, discharging at the end of each round as a burst of electricity between the two sets of bars to stun captives. This is a rank 6 Cumulative Affliction effect (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated). Touching the bars immediately triggers this effect for the creature touching them. The walls' tracks are designed to ratchet down and hold the grates in place once they've fallen, but a character who succeeds at a DC 23 Strength check can lift the wall and force it back into its ceiling slot, or a character can trigger the trap to reset with a successful DC 31 Technology check.

If the heroes wind up indefinitely trapped by the cattle pen, they're likely soon discovered by Mac Aodha or the escaping villains.

ENCOUNTER 3: PRISON BREAK

Toy Boy knew he'd need as much of a distraction as he could make as he infiltrated the Dungeon Dimension, so he's been using Warden's key to release villains from their prison cells as he makes his way toward the Secure Vault.

This attack takes place in three waves. If the dragon Mac Aodha is helping the heroes by confronting villains, omit the first two waves of villains—the dragon takes care of these foes. Otherwise, the heroes should encounter the three waves in quick succession in a running fight through the mazelike halls. As soon as the heroes encounter the first villain, the subsequent wave appears on the following round. If it starts to look like they might get overwhelmed, you can give them a longer interval. You can even intersperse it with the trap from Encounter 2, perhaps letting canny heroes lure villains into the device.

VILLAIN WAVE 1

The heroes first encounter a pair of the **Devil's Advocates**, whom Warden collected after the heroes' adventure at the Nerian Nexus. This adventure assumes **Angel** and **Cueball** are making a break for freedom now that they've been given the opportunity, but feel free to substitute any members of the Devil's Advocates if it makes more sense for your game. Cueball remembers the heroes if they met during *Assault on the Nerian Nexus* and is eager for a little payback.

THE DUNGEON DIMENSION

The Dungeon Dimension is a limbo dimension with several unique features that might interact with the heroes' powers. The walls and other features of the Dungeon Dimension are invulnerable to most damage (Impervious Toughness 15). This also renders them Impervious to Burrowing unless a character has the Penetrating extra.

Ceiling height in the corridors is 30 feet and most halls are 15 feet wide. Individual prison cells are 10-foot cubes. Only certain areas (the main cell column in **Encounter 2** and the secure vault in **Scene 7** being two examples) have higher ceilings. The ceiling height limits the altitude flying characters can reach; Favored Environment: Aerial does not apply.

Teleportation functions normally within a room or along line-of-sight within corridors, but attempts to teleport through doorways or otherwise beyond line of sight fail.

Movement (Dimensional Travel) allows a hero to enter the Dungeon Dimension, but leaving requires a DC 20 power check. A failed check disables a character's dimension-hopping powers for 1d20 hours.

This encounter takes place in a long, straight stretch of hallway intersected by other corridors at right angles.

ANGEL — PL 11

See **Cast** section.

COMBAT — **INITIATIVE +7**

Death Curse	—	Perception, Progressive Affliction 11
Death Stare	—	Perception, Cumulative Affliction 11
Death Touch	+11	Close, Cumulative Affliction 11
Unarmed	+13	Close, Damage 8

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+9	+10	+12	+9	+12

CUEBALL — PL 10

See **Cast** section.

COMBAT — **INITIATIVE +11**

War Axe	+9	Close, Damage 11
Unarmed	+12	Close, Damage 8

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+9	+9	+11	+9	+11

VILLAIN WAVE 2

This wave takes place as the heroes emerge into a massive cylindrical room some 20 stories high. The space is nearly 200 feet tall and 100 feet across, allowing for much less restricted flight, growth, and maneuvering. Railing-lined walkways encircle the open space at every floor, granting access to countless barred cell doors lining the exterior wall. Staircases connect each level to the next. A clamor of voices echoes through the space as a pair of inmates race along the walkways and staircases.

A band of Fomorian warriors have been trapped here in the dungeon dimension ever since they accompanied Bres the Beautiful on an ill-fated raid against Freedom Hall (as detailed in the adventure *Master of Earth*). The giants are bitter and aggressive and are spoiling for a fight. There is one Fomorian warrior per hero.

FOMORIAN WARRIORS — PL 7

See the **Cast** section. These characters are minions.

COMBAT		INITIATIVE +0
Club	+5	Close, Damage 9
Knife	+5	Close/Ranged, Damage 9
Unarmed	+5	Close, Damage 7

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+3	+3	+7	+3	+10/7*

*without Armor

VILLAIN WAVE 3

The final villain Toy Boy released has quite the axe to grind: **Bres the Beautiful** has been rotting in a cell alongside several of his soldiers since his defeat during an ill-fated raid on Freedom Hall (see the events in *Master of Earth*). He is desperate to escape and willing to use any attacks to achieve that end, even sacrificing his Fomorian guards. He uses his shapeshifting powers to assume the form of a helpless bystander during Wave 2, begging the heroes for aid and explaining that Warden kidnapped him for ransom. If the heroes buy his claims, he can catch them Vulnerable with a Mystic Blast when his second wave of Fomorian warriors attacks soon after.

If a hero accepts Bres's vulnerability story without question, award them a Hero Point.

There are as many Fomorian warriors as there are heroes.

BRES THE BEAUTIFUL — PL 10

See the **Cast** section.

COMBAT		INITIATIVE +6
Grasp of Ghorummaz	+8	Ranged, Affliction 8
Mystic Blast	+8	Ranged, Damage 8
Unarmed	+7	Close, Damage 4

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+12	+10	+8	+12	+8/6*

*without Defensive Roll

FOMORIAN WARRIORS — PL 7

See the **Cast** section. These characters are minions.

COMBAT		INITIATIVE +0
Club	+5	Close, Damage 9
Knife	+5	Close/Ranged, Damage 9
Unarmed	+5	Close, Damage 7

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+3	+3	+7	+3	+10/7*

*without Armor

WRAP-UP

After the heroes brave the dangers of the Dungeon Dimension, they finally arrive at the door sealing Warden's Secure Vault.

SCENE 6 — CHALLENGE SCENE

TRAPPED DOOR

The door to the Dungeon Dimension's Secure Vault is a secure ancient portal augmented with 21st century technology. Warden's key unlocks this door, and Toy Boy used the key to lock himself in.

If the heroes befriended Mac Aodha, the undead dragon, and gained his assistance in opening this door, the lock has been broken, and the heroes can walk right through. Otherwise, they will have to find their own way through.

The door has three locks, one each decorated with flames, blades, and skulls. Each lock requires a successful DC 20 Expertise (Magic) or Technology check. Each round after an attempt is made, any locks still sealed trigger a defensive effect that fills the entire room:

- The **Flame Lock** triggers a Burst Area Damage 8 fireball
- The **Blade Lock** triggers a Burst Area Penetrating Damage 8 energy blade
- The **Skull Lock** triggers a Burst Area Weaken Stamina 4 poison gas.

Anyone studying the door can determine these effects with a successful DC 20 Technology or Expertise (Magic) check. Each hero can make one attempt each round, so multiple characters working in the same round can prevent multiple traps.

The door doesn't prevent someone from bypassing it via powers such as Movement (Permeate) or Insubstantial, but such abilities trigger the traps, activating them against anyone remaining outside.

WRAP-UP

With the vault door open, nothing stands between the heroes and their final confrontation with Toy Boy. Because Scene 7 immediately follows Scene 6, the heroes have no chance to recover from any damage or other conditions they suffer while opening the trapped door.

SCENE 7 — CONFLICT SCENE

SECURE VAULT

As the heroes enter the vault, read or paraphrase the following:

> The vault of the Dungeon Dimension is an enormous, unadorned room of plain gray blocks of stone. Alcoves of varying sizes line the walls, holding an abundance of relics and artifacts. The smallest is a fleck of gleaming dust in a hole barely large enough to

fit a finger, while the largest is a huge alcove holding a massive statue carved of orange-red stone: a seated demon with huge gemstone eyes holding a flaming brazier.

Before one alcove stands a ventriloquist's puppet—sans ventriloquist—with arms raised, grasping at a golden, skull-shaped mask set with vibrant red gemstone. The mask trembles and shudders, as though it's fighting against the puppet's grasp.

As soon as the door opens (or the heroes otherwise enter the room), the puppet's attention shifts from the mask overhead to the newcomers. The mask, no longer the center of attention, snaps up toward the ceiling and disappears with a burst of red light and a tremendous whooshing sound. The puppet howls in fury and turns upon the newcomers. "You spoiled it! My newest toy—gone! Why are you awful heroes always ruining my games!?"

The Mask of Malador indeed shares a powerful connection to Earth, and Warden has only been able to keep it contained with a variety of technological locks Toy Boy has spent considerable time dismantling with his electronic expertise. Without these devices, only the villain's powerful will kept the Mask from hurtling across the dimensions back to Earth like a stone loosed from a taut slingshot. The heroes' arrival was just enough distraction for the final talisman to slip free from Toy Boy's grasp.

The Secure Vault is an enormous chamber, with a buttressed ceiling extending about 50 feet overhead. The room is roughly 60 feet wide and 120 feet long and lined with niches housing other dangerous objects—many of its devices confiscated from imprisoned supervillains, but some of it predates Warden's supervision. The unusual physics of the Dungeon Dimension allow this room to expand as necessary to accommodate new artifacts Warden stores here, but such changes are slow and the heroes are unlikely to need them.

While Toy Boy has been releasing various prisoners here in the Dungeon Dimension solely to create a distraction while he pursues the Secure Vault and the Mask of Malador, some of those inmates might look to Toy Boy as an informal leader. If the heroes are having a particularly easy time of this fight, more villains—additional Fomorian warriors, other members of the Hell's Advocates, or other villains from the pages of *Rogues Gallery* or *Threat Report*—might join the fray to aid their unexpected benefactor.

BREAKING TOYS

Having just had the Mask of Malador in his grasp, Toy Boy is furious at the newcomers who interrupted his plans. He turns upon the heroes and immediately attacks them for their interference.

The ventriloquist's puppet is carrying Warden's Door Key on a string around its neck, if a player thinks to ask. Stealing the key further infuri-

ates Toy Boy, but the villain has no further use for key or the Dungeon Dimension. The heroes can use the key to lock or unlock the door to the Secure Vault, or to lock or unlock any of the cells throughout the prison dimension. Clever heroes might use this to trap Toy Boy's band of toys in a cell. Given enough time, the heroes could also use the key to access the artifacts stored here, but the heavy chains, locks, and electronic monitors securing them require several hours of work each to disable.

THE FINAL CONFRONTATION

As an ghost, Toy Boy is difficult to confront directly. He's using the ventriloquist's puppet as his current body, but it's simply an animated object. He brought his entire toy chest of minions with him into the Dungeon Dimension to help him confront any threats, and he eagerly unleashes the horde against the heroes. The heroes must defeat these animated foes if they want to have any hope of defeating, imprisoning, or otherwise interacting directly with Toy Boy himself.

Still possessing his ventriloquist dummy, Toy Boy hangs back and directs waves of minions to attack. The first wave consists of two massive blobs of brightly colored **Fun Dough** and a horde of plastic **Army Soldiers**. One round later, he unleashes a tiny gang of Transmorpher **Action Figures**—two for each hero. If his dummy body is destroyed, Toy Boy isn't affected; while he enjoys having a body, his incorporeal spirit feels no pain. If this form is destroyed, he invests his psyche into the massive, demonic statue filling one end of the room. While his abilities are normally limited to animating toys, Desmond's rage and connection to Una are momentarily augmenting his powers; award each player a Hero Point for this GM use of the Edit Scene ability, then read or paraphrase the following:

> The broken puppet collapses to the ground. A moment later, a shrieking laugh erupts with no apparent source, echoing in the huge stone chamber. The ground underfoot rumbles ominously, and a gleam of red light shines in the jeweled eyes of the massive demonic statue at the front of the room. With a tremendous grinding of stone on stone, the statue shifts and then moves, coming to its feet and hurling its bronze bowl across the room with a resounding clash of shattering metal. Its form wavers and shifts, features blurring from demonic to adorable as it reshapes itself into an enormous teddy bear. "Break my toys, will you? Well let's see how you like it when I break you!"

Because Toy Boy has invested so much of his psyche into transforming the statue into a titanic teddy, he takes damage and conditions like Dazed and Stunned whenever he fails a damage check as if this were his physical body—he's possessing the form with his own life force rather than animating it as he did with the puppet. The statue can use Toy Boy's All the Toys power to summon duplicates of his ventriloquist puppet body as a Standard action. Because most of his power is tied up in maintaining control of the statue, he can control only eight puppets at a time and is Impaired if he controls more than four.

Destroying Titan Teddy leaves Toy Boy reeling and Incapacitated. He still howls in rage, but at this point the villain is helpless and at the heroes' mercy without any more playthings to act on his behalf.

ROLEPLAYING TOY BOY

Desmond Lettam was a spoiled and cruel child at the best of times, and death did little to improve his disposition. He's short-tempered, entitled, and erratic, but also a cunning genius who loves traps and games. In combat, he alternates between screaming about the heroes ruining his fun and coldly narrating how "My Dark Lady" will tear the flesh from their bones once she is one with the world.

Toy Boy will never betray Una and can't be convinced that she is using him, even if presented with solid evidence. Attempts to persuade Toy Boy to abandon his plans fall on deaf ears. His mortal mind has been severely jumbled thanks to his transition into a poltergeist and only his obsessive fixations keep him whole and powerful.

FUN DOUGH — PL 8

See **Cast** section. Minion.

COMBAT — INITIATIVE +0

Attack	+4	Close, Damage 8, plus Reaction Damage 5

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+0	+4	+8	—	+8

Totals: Abilities –20 + Powers 45 + Advantages 2 + Skills 0 + Defenses 8 = Total 35 points.]

ARMY SOLDIER SWARM — PL 5

See **Cast** section. Minion.

COMBAT — INITIATIVE +5

Swarm	—	Close, Shapeable, Damage 5

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+5	+2	+5	+0	+5

TRANSMORPHER ACTION FIGURE — PL 4

See **Cast** section. Minion.

COMBAT — INITIATIVE +0

Unarmed	+4	Close, Damage 0

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+3	+3	—	—	+5

VENTRILOQUIST PUPPET — PL 5

See **Cast** section. Minion.

COMBAT — INITIATIVE +1

Knife	+6	Close , Damage 3, Crit 19–20
Unarmed	+6	Close, Damage 2

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+5	+4	—	—	+5

TITAN TEDDY — PL 11

See **Cast** section.

COMBAT — INITIATIVE +11

Roundhouse	—	Close, Line Area, Damage 11
Unarmed	+6	Close, Damage 16

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+0	+4	—	+9	+18

Wrap-Up

Once the party has defeated Toy Boy's stone teddy titan form and his minions, the incorporeal villain has no remaining toys to animate.

If the heroes obtained the Orb of Ghorummaz from Ward in **Scene 4**, they can use it now to contain Desmond Lettam's troubled spirit indefinitely. This causes a swirling vortex of mystical energy that scoops up Toy Boy's bodiless form and sucks it into the orb. They must decide whether to turn him over to Warden, keep the mystical prison for themselves, or entrust his keeping to someone else (such as Sallah, Seven, or the Freedom City justice department).

Without the Orb of Ghorummaz, the heroes likely have no way to permanently disable or destroy Toy Boy's incorporeal form, but the lashing they deliver prevents him from re-forming for two weeks while his Immortality power pulls his spiritual energy back together. Since he has no body without any toys, Toy Boy can't wield the Door Key and is effectively trapped within the Dungeon Dimension. He may become a nuisance to Warden in the days to come, but his role in this adventure has come to a close.

Epilogue

Once the heroes defeat and potentially imprison Toy Boy, they can return control of the Dungeon Dimension to Warden if they wish. The sighting of the powerful Mask of Malador—and its subsequent disappearance—should encourage the heroes to investigate further, especially given Toy Boy's notes about a "Dark Lady" and his attempts to destroy the last remaining talismans blocking her plans. Even so, they likely have time to rest and recover before events sweep them up once more.

Whether he allied with the heroes or not, Warden joins the heroes here shortly after Toy Boy's defeat and demands the heroes return his Door Key. He begrudgingly admits the heroes might not be as soft as the rest of this city's soft-hearted heroes but changes his tune quickly if the heroes refuse to return his key and control of the dimension. If the heroes choose not to return the key, or even seal Warden inside his own prison, it takes the villain weeks to craft a new Door Key and finally escape, and he'll remember this slight against him for years to come.

The heroes might want to investigate the Mask of Malador and what its sudden disappearance might mean. A character who succeeds at a DC 15 Expertise (History, Mysticism, or similar) or Intellect check recalls the mask's origin and history (as explained in the sidebar on page @@). If they haven't already learned of its function as a talisman barring Una's ascension from Toy Boy's notes in the abandoned restaurant, they can easily find that information by going back to the restaurant and sorting through the notes once more or deduce it themselves with more research elsewhere. It should be an easy leap of logic for the heroes to guess that, when the mask vanished, it most likely teleported itself back to Earth—though learning its exact location and finding it are the subject of the next adventure in the NetherWar series, *Bound by Gold*.

Should the heroes succumb to Toy Boy's childish arsenal, the villain leaves them where they fell. The Mask of Malador has already left his grasp, and he leaves the Dungeon Dimension to try and learn where it has gone. The heroes awaken to discover Warden has imprisoned them all as punishment for their "collusion" with Toy Boy, and they will likely need to plot a daring escape of their own. If you're running the entire NetherWar adventure series, you could also use this as an opportunity for Medea to rescue the heroes, thus kicking off her plots in the next volume. By the time the heroes get back on their feet, the events of the next adventure may have already begun. You may instead decide that Seven uses her magic to retrieve them from the Dungeon Dimension and return them to their headquarters. In either case, you should consider adding Toy Boy as an active threat in the remaining installments of the NetherWar series.

Rewards

If the heroes manage to defeat Toy Boy and halt his plans to claim and destroy the Mask of Malador for Una, award them each 2 Power Points. If they also manage to imprison Toy Boy, either in the Orb of Ghorummaz or with a cunning plan of their own, grant them 1 additional Power Point.

Warden's vault in the Dungeon Dimension holds many odds and ends confiscated from his supervillain prisoners, not just mystical artifacts but also technological gadgets, wealth, and documents. Heroes who loot this treasure trove might discover new devices or be able to justify a new rank of Wealth. This hoard may also contain precious information for any heroes searching for missing persons or uncovering a mysterious past.

Continuing the Adventure

The disappearance of the Mask of Malador should have the heroes' attention, whether or not they defeated Toy Boy. The fate of the mask, along with the Dark Lady Una's ascension plans, are detailed in the next volume of the NetherWar adventure arc, *Bound by Gold*.

The 13 Villains of Warden

The Dungeon Dimension is a powerful mystic dimension whose base reality is built around containing lawbreakers and enemies. The heroes' presence during the break-out may tie their fates to escapees with powerful arcane threads. This bond only allows them to leave the Dungeon Dimension for a few hours at a time until the escaped villains are captured and returned to captivity, essentially putting the heroes at Warden's mercy!

Jail Break

Heroes looking for an additional challenge during this adventure might find that leaving the Dungeon Dimension is not as easy as entering it. If they parted with Warden on ill terms or were defeated by Toy Boy, Warden labels them "dangerous vigilantes" and imprisons them. Breaking out requires a cunning plan to gather resources, making alliances with villains locked up in the facility, and tackling the guardians and traps securing the dimension. And even the most brilliant plan is useless if the heroes can't get the Door Key away from Warden or figure out another way to leave the mystical dimension and return to Earth-Prime.

The Trial of John Warden

Rather than return the Dungeon Dimension to Warden's control, the heroes may arrest the authoritarian supervillain and turn him over to the authorities. But containing a prisoner obsessed with locks and restraints is nearly impossible, and the court needs first-hand testimony

to Warden's crimes. Can the heroes work alongside the prosecution to see justice is done, or will they be outwitted by a cunning defense team who hinge their case on the Dungeon Dimension being outside the city's jurisdiction, or will they walk Warden's path and imprison him without the consent of the law?

Cast

The following are the major characters encountered in *Broken Strings*, including their backgrounds and game stats.

Beamer and Screamer, the Transmorphers

These two smack-talking robot cars are life-sized replicas of classic toys from the 1980s. Their Morph power changes their appearance from giant robots to sleek sports cars, though their Speed power is only usable in their vehicle form.

Beamer and Screamer use the **Large Robot** minion archetype (*Deluxe Gamemaster's Guide*, page 152), with the addition of the Morph and Speed powers, as well as additional skill ranks in Athletics and Acrobatics.

Transmorphers PL 7

STR 9 **STA** — **AGL** 0 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 5 **INT** — **AWE** 0 **PRE** —

Powers: Built-In Weapons Ranged Damage 8, **Giant Robot** Growth 4, Immunity to Fortitude Effects, **Transmorph** Morph 1 (vehicle form), Speed 8 (500 MPH; Quirk: Only in vehicle form).

Skills: Acrobatics 11 (+11), Athletics 2 (+11), Ranged Combat: Built-In Weapons 6 (+6).

Combat Initiative +0

Unarmed	+5	Close, Damage 9
Weapon Systems	+6	Ranged, Damage 8

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
+3	+4	—	—	+10

Totals: Abilities -10 + Powers 67 + Advantages 0 + Skills 10 (19 ranks) + Defenses 12 = 79

Warden

John Warden is a hardline authoritarian and control freak who helped build Freedom City's extraordinary prison infrastructure to contain the city's supervillains, only to see them turned loose time after time over technicalities like "lack of evidence" or "concluding their sentence." He adopted the guise of Warden, the ultimate jailer, to see to it no criminal walked the streets again, regardless of the severity of their crimes or chance at reform.

A recent surge of inspiration prompted the construction of his unearthly Door Key, which granted the otherwise human Warden access to and control over the bizarre Dungeon Dimension.

More information on Warden can be found on page 315 of *Freedom City*. The version of Warden the heroes confront in this adventure lacks his Door key, reducing his PL to 10.

Mac Aodha

Mac Aodha is an ancient entity bound to the Dungeon Dimension as a powerful guardian. If he ever had another name, role, or even body before this, the ancient dragon has long since forgotten. He is humorless and literal, fixated on his work as a guardian and interested only in learning about potential new inmates and what measures may be needed to contain them. A cold, blue flame burns inside his chest, visible through the cracked ribs.

Only the Dungeon Dimension's strange, mystical laws allow Mac Aodha to survive as an animated creature of bones and dust, and he is unable to leave—facts that leave Warden privately wondering if his chief guard isn't actually the dimension's oldest surviving inmate.

Mac Aodha PL 12

STR 13 **STA** 12 **AGL** 0 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 8 **INT** 4 **AWE** 6 **PRE** 4

Powers: Bite Damage 1 (Strength-Based, Penetrating 14), **Dragon** Flight (120 MPH), Growth 10 (Innate; Permanent), Immunity 10 (Slashing Damage, Piercing Damage; Limited to Half Effect), Immunity 5 (Cold Damage), Protection 2 (Impervious 14), Senses 6 (Accurate Hearing, Acute Smell, Low-light Vision, Tracking, Ultra-hearing), **Frost Breath** Cone Area Damage 10, **Undead** Immunity 30 (Fortitude Effects).

Advantages: Fearless, Improved Grab, Improved Initiative, Startle.

Skills: Expertise: Law 5 (+9), Intimidation 5 (+14), Perception 8 (+14).

Combat Initiative +4

Bite	+8	Close, Penetrating Damage 12
Frost breath	—	Close, Cone Area, Damage 10
Unarmed	+8	Close, Damage 13

Dodge	Parry	Fortitude	Will	Toughness
+5	+7	—	+11	+14

Totals: Abilities 54 + Powers 116 + Advantages 4 + Skills 9 (18 ranks) + Defenses 19 = 202

The Devil's Advocates

A Satan-worshiping biker-gang leader and his three lieutenants, the Devils Advocates signed a diabolic pact to become hellish horsemen, riding steeds of iron. The gang works as magical mercenaries and enforcers, or prowls the roads as agents of chaos. The remaining two leaders of the gang, Born Loser and Buddy, may be imprisoned elsewhere in the Dungeon Dimension or may have escaped before Warden could capture them, as suits your campaign.

Their role in this adventure is minor, but more information on the Devil's Advocates can be found on page 137 of *Rogue's Gallery*.

Angel

The Advocate's leader, Link Thomas dabbled in evil magic for thrills, ultimately conjuring the devil and promising the souls of himself and his three lieutenants in exchange for power. He's cooler and more collected than the other Advocates, but still casually cruel and a thrill seeker—simply staider. Angel channels the Horseman of Death, allowing him to inspire paralyzing fear with a stare or kill with a touch, in addition to the phenomenal strength and resilience all the Devil's Advocates share.

CUEBALL

Avatar of the Horseman of War, Jake Duncan was a violent and unreasonable man even before selling his soul. Now supernaturally tough and wielding a mystic "War Axe" that can cleave through cars, his violent impulses have no check. He responds to any frustration with overwhelming force.

BRES THE BEAUTIFUL AND HIS FOMORIANS

An ancient demigod, Bres is a vain and tricky sorcerer of ancient Irish myth. Having been captured after a failed raid against Freedom Hall some time ago, he and his legion of loyal mutant soldiers have stewed, quietly seething at their confinement and plotting a way to return to their native realm of Annwn.

Bres is currently deprived of his Eye of Balor, a powerful mystic artifact, reducing his PL to 11. More information on Bres and the Fomorians can be found on page 19 of *Rogues Gallery*.

BRES THE BEAUTIFUL

The son of a Fomorian and the legendary Tuatha DeDanon, Bres is a demigod born with mystic powers of trickery and illusion. He was once a feared conqueror and the warlord of Annwn, but years of confinement in the Dungeon Dimension have left him indignant and furious. He's eager to escape Warden's prison, and if combat doesn't work, he'll bargain with heroes or play on their sympathies, describing the pain and indignity he has suffered under Warden's charge.

FOMORIAN WARRIORS

Fomorians are mutants displaying an enormous variety in shape and abilities, but Bres trains the largest and most formidable as his personal soldiers and bodyguards.

FOMORIAN WARRIORS — **PL 7**

STR 7 **STA** 7 **AGL** 0 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 3 **INT** 0 **AWE** 4 **PRE** 0

Powers: Growth 4 (Innate; Permanent)

Equipment: Chain-mail (Protection 3), Club (Damage 2), Knife (Damage 1)

Advantages: Close Attack 2, Equipment 2

Skills: Expertise: Survival 4 (+4), Insight 2 (+2), Intimidation 4 (+6), Perception 4 (+4), Ranged Combat: Throw 4 (+4)

COMBAT — **INITIATIVE +0**

Club	+5	Close, Damage 9
Knife	+5	Close/Ranged, Damage 9; Crit 19–20
Unarmed	+5	Close, Damage 7

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+3	+3	+7	+3	+10/7*

*without Armor

Totals: Abilities 18 + Powers 9 + Advantages 4 + Skills 9 (18 ranks) + Defenses 10 = 50

TOY BOY AND HIS TOYS

Desmond Lettam was a spoiled child afflicted with an unusual genetic quirk: His body stopped aging shortly after his eighth birthday, though his mind grew more sophisticated and brilliant with every passing day. Soon an outsider among his peers, Lettam retreated into his role as an eternal child, growing increasingly obsessed with his toys—amply provided by his family's ownership of the Fun-Time Toy company—and eventually began designing his own. His increasingly antisocial nature clouded his judgement, and he began to see the people around him as mere playthings—distractions he could test his toys on in increasingly dangerous games.

By the time Lettam's genetic condition began to kill him, he'd already terrorized Freedom City for decades as the timeless Toy Boy. Una used her power to transform the dying man into a poltergeist whose singular fixation on toys and amusements allowed him to bridge the divide between spirit and flesh and act as her hands in the world.

TOY BOY

Desmond Lettam is spoiled and reactionary, with a cunning mind that can devise all sorts of cruel retributions for any perceived sleight. He loves games and is increasingly growing to love the fear his animated toys seem to inspire. More information on Toy Boy can be found on page 307 of *Freedom City*.

FUN DOUGH

A sticky, salty clay substitute, Toy Boy's Fun Dough is a massive, aggressive blob. Fun Dough uses the statblock for the **Blob** from the *Deluxe Gamemaster's Guide*.

FUN DOUGH — **PL 8**

STR 8 **STA** 8 **AGL** 0 **DEX** –4 **FGT** 4 **INT** — **AWE** 0 **PRE** —

Powers: Reaction Damage 5 (When touched), Growth 8 (Permanent, Innate), Insubstantial 1 (Permanent, Innate), Movement 1 (Slithering).

Advantages: Improved Grab, Improved Hold.

COMBAT — **INITIATIVE +0**

Attack	+4	Close, Damage 8, plus Reaction Damage 5

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+0	+4	+8	—	+8

Totals: Abilities –20 + Powers 45 + Advantages 2 + Skills 0 + Defenses 8 = Total 35 points.]

ARMY SOLDIERS

Toy Boy can animate hundreds of tiny plastic infantry figurines with a thought, who move and attack as a single, amorphous opponent. The Army Soldier Swarm uses that statblock for the **Devouring Swarm** from the *Deluxe Gamemaster's Guide*.

ARMY SOLDIER SWARM — PL 5

See **Cast** section. Minion.

STR 2 **STA** 5 **AGL** 5 **DEX** –1 **FGT** 2 **INT** –4 **AWE** 0 **PRE** –5

Powers: Damage 5 (Shapeable Area), Insubstantial 1 (Innate; Permanent), Movement 1 (Wall-crawling).

*No effective Strength due to Insubstantial effect

COMBAT — INITIATIVE +5

Swarm	—	Close, Shapeable, Damage 5

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+5	+2	+5	+0	+5

Totals: Abilities 8 + Powers 18 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 (0 ranks) + Defenses 0 = 26 points.

TRANSMORPHER ACTION FIGURES

These transforming robot toys are scaled-down versions of Screamer and Beamer, the life-sized transforming cars the heroes fought earlier in the adventure. The Transmorpher action figure uses that statblock for the **Small Robot** from the *Deluxe Gamemaster's Guide*.

TRANSMORPHER ACTION FIGURES — PL 4

STR 0 **STA** — **AGL** 0 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 0 **INT** — **AWE** 0 **PRE** —

Powers: Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects), Protection 5, Shrinking 4 (Permanent, Innate).

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+4).

COMBAT — INITIATIVE +0

Unarmed	+4	Close, Damage 0

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+3	+3	—	—	+5

Totals: Abilities –28 + Powers 44 + Advantages 0 + Skills 2 + Defenses 2 = Total 20 points.

VENTRILOQUIST PUPPET

Lettam's preferred "body," the ventriloquist doll is little more than a puppet. He can use the toy's dexterous hands for the delicate electronics work he still loves but feels no pain or need to sleep. Attacks that Daze or Stun the puppet don't affect Toy Boy himself, and he can take mental actions to animate more toys (if available) or Taunt the heroes.

VENTRILOQUIST PUPPET — PL 5

STR 2 **STA** — **AGL** 1 **DEX** –1 **FGT** 2 **INT** — **AWE** 0 **PRE** —

Powers: Immunity to Fortitude Effects, Shrinking 4 (+4 Stealth, +2 active defenses, -1 size rank; Innate, Normal Strength; Permanent).

Equipment: Knife (Damage 2, Crit 19–20).

Advantages: Close Attack 4, Equipment 1.

COMBAT — INITIATIVE +1

Knife	+6	Close , Damage 3, Crit 19–20
Unarmed	+6	Close, Damage 2

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+5	+4	—	—	+5

Totals: Abilities -22 + Powers 43 + Advantages 5 + Skills 0 (0 ranks) + Defenses 7 = 33

TITAN TEDDY

This massive stone construct is an extraordinary extension of Toy Boy's powers, pushed to their limit by rage and Una's influence.

TITAN TEDDY — PL 11

STR 16 **STA** — **AGL** 0 **DEX** 1 **FGT** 4 **INT** 11 **AWE** 1 **PRE** 1

Powers: All the Toys Summon 3 (Active, Controlled, Horde, Mental Link, Multiple Minions 6, Type (General: Toys), **Animated Stone** Growth 8; Innate; Permanent), Immortality 2 (Return after 1 week), Immunity 30 (Fortitude Effects), Protection 10 Impervious), **Roundhouse** Line Area on 11 ranks of Strength Damage.

Advantages: Artificer, Close Attack 2, Fascinate (Intimidation), Fast Grab, Fearless, Inventor, Speed of Thought, Taunt.

Skills: Close Combat: Toys 3 (+7), Deception 8 (+9), Expertise: Magic 4 (+15), Expertise: Toys 6 (+17), Insight 4 (+5), Intimidation 6 (+11), Perception 4 (+5), Ranged Combat: Toys 7 (+8), Technology 8 (+19).

COMBAT — INITIATIVE +11

Roundhouse	—	Close, Line Area, Damage 11
Unarmed	+6	Close, Damage 16

DODGE	PARRY	FORTITUDE	WILL	TOUGHNESS
+0	+4	—	+9	+18

Totals: Abilities 42 + Powers 142 + Advantages 9 + Skills 25 (50 ranks) + Defenses 16 = 234

WARDEN PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
3	2	3	2	12	4	3	1

EQUIPMENT

Body armor (Protection 4), Helmet (Commlink, Infravision, Low-light Vision), Smoke grenades (Cloud Area Visual Concealment Attack 4), Taser (Ranged Affliction 5), Tonfa (Strength-based Damage 2)

SKILLS

Expertise: Magic 6 (+10), Expertise: Traps 16 (+20), Insight 8 (+11), Intimidation 6 (+7), Investigation 12 (+16), Perception 8 (+11), Ranged Combat: Guns 8 (+10), Sleight of Hand 10 (+12), Stealth 8 (+11), Technology 12 (+16), Vehicles 6 (+8)

ADVANTAGES

Artificer, Assessment, Benefit 3 (Master of the Dungeon Dimension), Chokehold, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 2, Favored Environment (Prisons), Improved Hold, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Improvised Tools, Inventor, Quick Draw, Seize Initiative, Skill Mastery (Technology), Ultimate Effort (Technology skill checks)

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +7

Taser +10	Ranged, Affliction 5 (Fortitude DC 15)
Tonfa +12	Close, Damage 8
Unarmed +12	Close, Damage 3

DEFENSE

DODGE	12	**FORTITUDE**	9
PARRY	12	**TOUGHNESS**	8/6*
WILL	11	*Without Defensive Roll bonus	

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	60	**SKILLS**	50
POWERS	0	**DEFENSES**	24
ADVANTAGES	26	**TOTAL**	160

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Control: Warden wants to control people, situations, everything, and ruthlessly eliminates threats to his control and influence.

NOTES

DAMAGE

DAZED? ☐
One standard action each round

STAGGERED? ☐
One standard action, –1 movement

INCAPACITATED? ☐
Defenseless, Stunned, Unaware

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE: ANGEL PL11

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
8	12	7	8	10	1	2	3

POWERS

Hell's Blessings: Immunity 5 (Aging, Disease, Cold, Heat, Poison) • *5 points*

Angel of Death Array (44 points)

- **Death Curse:** Perception Ranged Progressive Affliction 11 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Dying; Limited: target makes one check per day) • *44 points*
- **Death Stare:** Perception Ranged Cumulative Affliction 11 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Impaired, Stunned, Paralyzed; Sense-dependent [Vision]) • *1 point*
- **Death Touch:** Cumulative Affliction 11 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Impaired, Disabled, Dying) • *1 point*

EQUIPMENT

Motorcycle (Medium; Str 1; Spd 6; Def 0; Tou 8)

SKILLS

Close Combat: Death Touch 1 (+11), Close Combat: Unarmed 3 (+13), Expertise: Magic 4 (+5), Expertise: Streetwise 5 (+6), Intimidation 5 (+8), Perception 2 (+4), Vehicles 4 (+12)

ADVANTAGES

Diehard, Equipment 2 (motorcycle), Ritualist, Teamwork

OFFENSE

	INITIATIVE +7
Death Curse —	Perception, Progressive Affliction 11
Death Stare —	Perception, Cumulative Affliction 11
Death Touch	Close, Cumulative Affliction 11
Unarmed +13	Close, Damage 8

DEFENSE

DODGE	9	FORTITUDE	12
PARRY	10	TOUGHNESS	12
WILL	9		

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	102	SKILLS	12
POWERS	51	DEFENSES	9
ADVANTAGES	5	TOTAL	179

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Greed: Angel forfeited his soul to gain the world, and wants more of everything in exchange.

Weakness: Contact with supernatural "Good" things, such as blessed weapons, holy water, or consecrated ground, repels the demonically tainted Angel, causing him tremendous pain. He resists this torment with Fortitude (rank depending on the size of the item and supernatural potency, consecrated ground is DC 15, for example), with failure leaving him stunned, dazed, or incapacitated as long as he remains exposed.

NOTES

DAMAGE

DAZED? ☐
One standard action each round

STAGGERED? ☐
One standard action, –1 movement

INCAPACITATED? ☐
Defenseless, Stunned, Unaware

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE: CUEBALL PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
8	11	7	9	9	1	3	5

POWERS

War Axe: Strength-based Damage 3, Reach (ranged); Advantages: Improved Critical, Weapon Break; Easily Removable • *4 points*

Hell's Blessings: Immunity 5 (Aging, Critical Hits, Cold, Heat), Impervious Toughness 11) • *16 points*

EQUIPMENT

Motorcycle (Medium; Str 1; Spd 6; Def 0; Tou 8)

SKILLS

Close Combat: Unarmed 3 (+12), Expertise: Streetwise 5 (+6), Expertise: Tactics 9 (+10), Intimidation 5 (+10), Perception 3 (+6), Vehicles 3 (+12)

ADVANTAGES

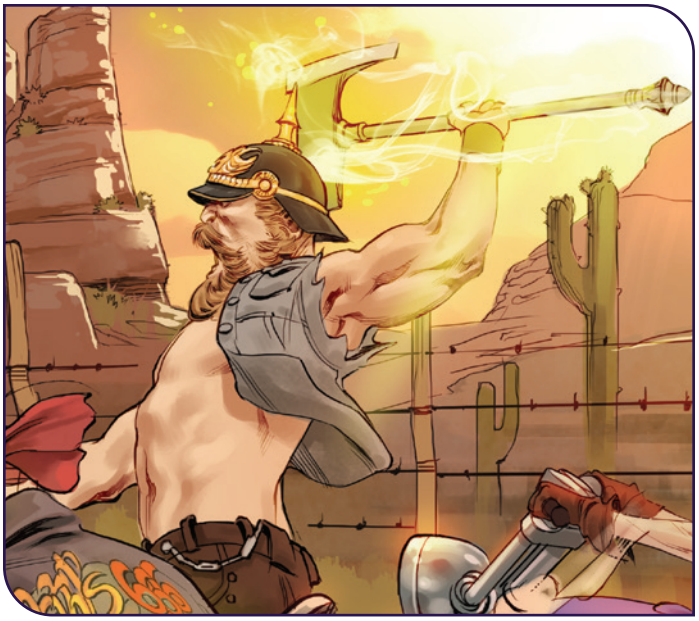
All-out Attack, Equipment 2 (motorcycle), Fearless, *Improved Critical (War Axe)*, Improved Critical 4 (Unarmed), Improved Initiative, Improvised Weapon, Leadership, Power Attack, Startle, Takedown 2, Teamwork, *Weapon Break*

OFFENSE

	INITIATIVE +11
War Axe +9	Close, Damage 11 (Crit 19–20)
Unarmed +12	Close, Damage 8

DEFENSE

DODGE	9	**FORTITUDE**	11
PARRY	9	**TOUGHNESS**	11
WILL	9		



POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	106	**SKILLS**	14
POWERS	20	**DEFENSES**	8
ADVANTAGES	16	**TOTAL**	164

COMPLICATIONS

Complications: Motivation—Greed: Cueball is a total mercenary.

Hatred: Duncan despises peacemakers, pacifists, and antiwar activists.

Temper: Duncan's frustrations inevitably lead to violence.

Weakness: Contact with supernatural "Good" things, such as blessed weapons, holy water, or consecrated ground, repels the demonically tainted Cueball, causing him tremendous pain. He resists this torment with Fortitude (rank depending on the size of the item and supernatural potency, consecrated ground is DC 15, for example), with failure leaving him stunned, dazed, or incapacitated as long as he remains exposed.

NOTES

DAMAGE

DAZED? ☐
One standard action each round

STAGGERED? ☐
One standard action, –1 movement

INCAPACITATED? ☐
Defenseless, Stunned, Unaware

BRES THE BEAUTIFUL PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
4	4	2	1	7	2	3	3

POWERS

Fomorian Magic: Array (22 points)

- **Mystic Blast:** Ranged Damage 11 • *22 points*
- **Airts of Ahgrazul:** Movement 2 (mystic dimensions) • *1 point*
- **All-Seeing Eyes of Abbridon:** Remote Sensing 5 (visual, auditory, mental) • *1 point*
- **Earth Moving:** Move Object 11, Limited to Earth • *1 point*
- **Grasp of Ghorummaz:** Ranged Affliction 8 (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Damage; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobilized), Extra Condition, Limited Degree, Affects Insubstantial 2, Indirect • *1 point*
- **Mystic Passasge:** Teleport 11 • *1 point*
- **Scarlet Shades of Sirrion:** Cloud Area 2 (30 ft. radius), Concealment Attack 4 • *1 point*
- **Third Wheel of Weyan:** Deflect 11, Reflect • *1 point*

Shapeshifting: Morph 3 (humanoid forms) • *15 points*

SKILLS

Deception 8 (+11), Expertise: Magic 9 (+11), Insight 8 (+11), Intmidation 6 (+9), Perception 6 (+9), Persuasion 5 (+8), Ranged Combat: Magic 4 (+9), Stealth 5 (+7), Technology 5 (+7)

ADVANTAGES

Accurate Attack, Defensive Roll 2, Fascinate (Deception), Improved Initiative, Languages 2 (Ancient Celt, English, Fomorian native), Leadership, Ranged Attack 3, Ritualist, Taunt

OFFENSE

	INITIATIVE +6
Grasp of Ghorummaz +8	Ranged Affliction 8 (Dodge)
Mystic Blast +8	Ranged Damage 11
Unarmed +7	Close, Damage 4

DEFENSE

DODGE	12	**FORTITUDE**	8
PARRY	10	**TOUGHNESS**	8/6*
WILL	12	*Without Defensive Roll	

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	52	**SKILLS**	28
POWERS	44	**DEFENSES**	26
ADVANTAGES	13	**TOTAL**	163

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Power: An exiled king, Bres is motivated by a desire to reclaim his lost power and influence and to maintain his rule over his people.

NOTES

DAMAGE

DAZED? ☐
One standard action each round

STAGGERED? ☐
One standard action, –1 movement

INCAPACITATED? ☐
Defenseless, Stunned, Unaware

TOY BOY PL9

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
-	-	0	-1	4	11	1	1

POWERS

All the Toys: Summon Toys 3 (45 points), Active, Controlled, General Type, Horde, Mental Link, Multiple Minions 6 (64 minions) • *55 points*

Bodiless Wraith: Concealment 10 (all senses), Flight 1, Immortality 2 (one week), Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects), Insubstantial 4 (incorporeal, affected by magic) • *76 points*

SKILLS

Close Combat: Toys 3 (+7), Deception 8 (+9), Expertise: Magic 4 (+15), Expertise: Toys 6 (+17), Insight 4 (+5), Intimidation 6 (+7), Perception 4 (+5), Ranged Combat: Toys 9 (+8), Technology 8 (+19)

ADVANTAGES

Artificer, Fascinate (Intimidation), Fast Grab, Fearless, Inventor Speed of Thought, Taunt

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +11

Toy Attacks +8	Various effects, typically Damage 8 (DC 23)

DEFENSE

DODGE	0	**FORTITUDE**	Immune
PARRY	4	**TOUGHNESS**	0
WILL	9		

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	12	**SKILLS**	27
POWERS	131	**DEFENSES**	8
ADVANTAGES	7	**TOTAL**	184

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Let's Play! Toy Boy is motivated by a mad obsession with games, particularly cruel and deadly ones, and committing crimes as "playing."

Nonentity: A bodiless wraith, Toy Boy's sole presence in the world of the living is the control he exerts over various toys of his own creation.

NOTES

DAMAGE

DAZED? ☐
One standard action each round

STAGGERED? ☐
One standard action, –1 movement

INCAPACITATED? ☐
Defenseless, Stunned, Unaware

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